



**Testimony of the MetroHartford Alliance
In Opposition to
Senate Bill 462: An Act Concerning a Fair Share Health Care Surcharge**

**Thursday, March 9, 2006
Labor & Public Employees Committee**

Good Afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the committee. I am Oz Griebel, President and CEO of the MetroHartford Alliance. Our organization consists of over 2,300 members, bringing together business, nonprofit organizations and civic leaders to invest in the Hartford region's future economic growth. On behalf of our members, I am here today to voice strong opposition to Senate Bill 462, An Act Concerning a Fair Share Health Care Surcharge.

This legislation runs contrary to the goals of job creation and economic development that our organization is working towards and that this legislature has enthusiastically endorsed this session. It can't be repeated often enough – Connecticut is last in job growth nationwide. It is time we begin to address the reasons why we are last, and recognize that this legislation is certainly not a step in the right direction.

Last August, the Alliance orchestrated a site selector tour, where we hosted 12 global site location consultants and corporate real estate executives to explore our region and all that it has to offer – from accessibility to adaptability. Yet, even with all that our capitol city and this region have to offer, Connecticut's anti-business climate represses growth. As part of their evaluation, site selectors nationwide assess the business climate when considering where to relocate or expand, and in doing so they evaluate the legislation that is offered by this General Assembly. By raising legislation that would impose another tax on business, you are sending the wrong message to our existing businesses, and you are also lessening our ability to be competitive across the country.

The real issue that we need to address is affordability in health care, which is an issue your colleagues in the Insurance Committee are working on as we speak, and it is one that we include in our legislative agenda. The Insurance Committee is researching thoughtful solutions to this problem, while the Appropriations Committee is also evaluating the recent cuts to SAGA (state administered general assistance) and the uncompensated care pool that ultimately impact the private consumer of healthcare by increasing the overall cost. Both committees should be applauded for their efforts to address the affordability issue.

Similarly, leadership in the House and Senate has also stepped up to this challenge. In December, our organization was asked to participate in an Insurance and Financial Services Forum, which was called by Speaker Amann and Senate President Don Williams. It raised several questions including how to deal with job loss in our state and how to address the issue of healthcare affordability. Since that time, we, along with Bob Flynn of the IFS Cluster, have had follow up meetings with both leaders to discuss these issues further. Our most recent suggestion to both was to hold a Healthcare Summit, similar to the Transportation Summit that was held in 2000, and to create a similar analysis that the Transportation Strategy Board created—the results of which are currently being pursued with great support by this Legislature. The issue of healthcare is just as complicated as our transportation crisis, if not more so. We feel it deserves the same level of attention, by bringing together all affected parties to discuss real solutions.

Senate Bill 462, however, is not a potential solution to the problem of affordability. It is a penalty on employers – the same employers who we want to relocate and expand in Connecticut. We respectfully ask that you oppose Senate Bill 462.